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ABSTRACT

An American Indian (Arapaho) educator portrays various levels of student response and receptivity toward teaching from an Indigenous perspective by recounting some of his teaching experiences at universities in Montana, Canada, and Australia. A class of Native students who had to negotiate for their grades in a treaty written in Arapaho and interpreted by the teacher's interpreter felt they better appreciated their ancestors' struggles. Some students that were given a quiz written from an Indigenous perspective became so frustrated when faced with a different world view that they chose to believe the test was composed of trick questions. An exercise in Arapaho language translation in a course on "Indian culture as expressed through language" elicited comments from some that it was a worthless exercise; few students were able to see that a radically different word order in a language indicates that the speakers possess different logical constructs and perceive the world differently from an English speaker. In several cases, perceived teacher deficits provided a rationale for those who did not want to consider issues presented from an Indigenous perspective that differed from their own. Non-Indigenous people have informed the teacher that his perspective is not Indigenous at all. A concluding story told from an Indigenous perspective expresses the hope that people will not become judgmental when faced with cultural differences and will listen to what Indigenous people say when invited to share their views. (TD)

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Observations on Response Towards Indigenous Cultural Perspectives as Paradigms in the Classroom

Stephen Greymorning

For well over a century Indigenous North Americans (Canadian and American Indians) have been forced to adapt to Anglo-European perspectives on how Indigenous people should be educated and what they should learn. Over the past 15 years North American colleges and universities have experienced growing numbers of Indigenous faculty teaching Indigenous focused subjects. As an Indigenous North American (American Indian) I have taught classes at the University of Alberta in Canada, the University of Montana in the United States, and Southern Cross University in Australia. On the basis of experiences gained while at these institutions, this paper has brought forward my observations of various levels of response and receptivity toward the use of a teaching style shaped by an Indigenous perspective.

Over the past two decades colleges and universities in North America have experienced greater numbers of Indigenous students who have completed college and university studies and obtained degrees across a broad spectrum of disciplines. As the number of Indigenous student enrollments has increased, interest in subjects concerning Indigenous issues has also increased. Coincident with this has also been a marked growth in the number of Indigenous faculty being employed to teach Indigenous-focused subjects at various colleges and universities.

In 1987, as part of that growing Indigenous education movement, I chose to leave Oklahoma, where I was a graduate student, and moved to Edmonton, Alberta, Canada to finish writing my doctoral dissertation on Indigenous North Americans and the ethnocentrism of the courts.

As Hinono'ei, an Arapaho Indian and Indigenous North American, I have lectured classes at the University of Alberta in Canada, the University of Montana in the United States, and Southern Cross University in Australia. Over the course of years that I have lectured, I have also had the opportunity to talk with other Indigenous scholars and have noted similar teaching experiences among many of us. Through my own experiences and those shared by others, I have become fascinated by the responses of students enrolled in courses on Indigenous North American topics. One of the observations noted is a difference that at times is displayed by students who take courses on Indigenous topics taught by Indigenous faculty, versus students who take courses on Indigenous topics taught by faculty who themselves are not Indigenous. Most notably, however, are responses I have noticed by students who have enrolled in Indigenous North American focused courses that I have taught from a perspective that in-

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corporated an Indigenous world view. While for the most part I have taught classes primarily composed of students who are not "Indian," I have also had the opportunity to teach classes composed entirely of Indigenous students. I believe the comparison of these different situations presents noteworthy experiences. Before delving into these specific areas of observations, however, it is worth looking at a somewhat different area to provide a backdrop from which to work.

The horrors of semantics: Raving a graduate student's bravings, or was that braving a graduate student's ravings

In January of 1989 I found myself teaching an Introductory Linguistic Anthropology course to a class of approximately 45 students. At the time I was just beginning to write my dissertation and was a recent resident of Canada.

One of the things that helped me get a clearer perspective on the experience learned from this class was the good fortune of having a graduate student in the class who was also taking another linguistic course. Throughout the term this graduate student would frequently comment on the innovativeness of material I presented compared to the other linguistic course she was enrolled in. One of the projects I had the class do was to break up into five groups of nine, and within each group one person had to learn the signing symbols used by Washoe, a chimpanzee that had learned to communicate using a type of sign language. Through the use of these symbols, and without speaking, the lead student had to teach the members of their group how to communicate with each other through Washoe's signing.

Another project was to bring in speakers of four different languages. The guests represented speakers of Chipewyan, Cree, Portuguese, and Farsi—languages with which the students in the class were completely unfamiliar. Each speaker was assigned to a group which learned how to ask in the language of that group's guest speaker, "what is this?" From this one phrase the group had to construct as much of the language as possible and then write a paper on the exercise and what was learned; the results were startlingly impressive. Though there were other such innovative exercises, as the term progressed one of the things that seemed to emerge was that students perceived me as a graduate teaching assistant. The class seemed to move well enough until the first quiz.

I had decided to blind test the first quiz on an individual who had no linguistic experience but who I knew was a good problem solver. The quiz was made up in such a manner that an observing student could find clues for answers to most of the questions asked within the body of the quiz itself. In some cases clues to an answer for a question could be found in the previous question. The student I chose to test the quiz on received a low "C." When I graded the quiz for the class, however, the medium fell below passing. After the graded quizzes were returned and I explained how I blind tested the quiz, students became irritated and implied I had insulted their intellects by doing this. Matters became worse when the graduate student, in an effort to support me, informed students that the quiz held numerous clues to answers. As clues were revealed, students

then believed I had subjected them to a test full of trick questions. In the end students perceived me as an instructor who was too young and inexperienced to teach, even though at 39 I was twice the age of most students in the class. One thing worth noting is that throughout the term students never seemed to deviate from identifying me as anything other than a graduate student teaching a traditionally academic subject which I was supposedly too young and inexperienced to teach. I was thus never cast as an "Indian" teaching a subject I did not have the experience to teach.

Native to Native: Teaching academic courses to Indigenous students.

In the September 1992 term, I taught two courses for the School of Native Studies and a course for the Department of Anthropology. The two courses taught for the School of Native Studies were "Indian Activism" and "Aboriginal Self-Government." The course taught for the Department of Anthropology was "Contemporary Canadian Native Peoples." While about 96% of the students enrolled in the "Indian Activism" course were Indigenous students, the other two courses were taught for the Yellow Head Indian Tribal Council on the Enoch reserve and all enrolled students were Indigenous.

In all three of the classes the work loads were quite rigorous. In all three courses students were assigned a paper on the first day of class that was due the next time the class met. Almost all students handed their assignments in on time, but in the few cases where extensions were requested, they were all reasonable and extended assignments were handed in on time relative to the adjusted dates. Another observation worth noting was the enthusiasm with which the Indigenous students pursued these courses. One example of this happened in the Indian Activism class. The second assignment for this class required the class go to see the movie *1492: Conquest of Paradise* and write a four to six page movie critique. The critique was due one week after the viewing. Two days after the viewing an Indigenous student turned in a 60 page critique! I was stunned and must confess my first thoughts were that the student must have borrowed liberally from a previous assignment. That, however, was not the case. All critiques were turned in on time, and I received a critique from another student that exceeded 30 pages. Throughout the term, attendance for this 2 1/2 hour night class of about 30 students remained high. Discussions and debates were quite lively. Students displayed the utmost respect toward each other, myself, and the issues that surrounded the topic. The two other classes were taught on the Enoch reserve and displayed similar student responses. In the end all students felt that they had learned and benefited from these classes.

Teaching through Indigenous perspectives

Probably the first time I brought an Indigenous perspective to a class occurred during the September 1991 term when I taught a course for the School of Native Studies. It was within this academic venue that I had the opportunity to teach classes with a predominantly Indigenous student enrollment. The course was entitled "A Comparative Study of Indian Legislation in Canada and the

United States."[1] Student composition for this class was roughly 90% Indigenous, and 10% non-Indigenous. In spite of a high Indigenous student enrollment in the class, throughout the term I noticed a number of condescending remarks coming from the Indigenous students regarding Indigenous history and issues. When one Metis[2] student stated that "our" ancestors had given away their rights when they signed treaties and it was time "Indians stopped whining around about it and get on with things like every one else," I finally decided that it was appropriate to address this perspective.

At the end of the ninth week of a thirteen-week term, I informed students that I was not happy with their efforts in the class, and as a result I was nullifying all of the grades they had received from the previous nine weeks of study. The class response to this was a bit explosive. Pandemonium broke out, but since the announcement was timed for the end of the class period and time had run out I informed the class that I would be prepared to continue discussions and negotiations the following week. I further informed them to think of the following week as a kind of treaty week. Over the weekend I took the liberty to draft a document which I modeled after the Canadian government's treaty 6 document for that area of the province. The only drawback for them was understanding a treaty that was written in the Arapaho language. Once the treaty had been prepared, I then prepared an assistant to help me with simulation. The only thing that remained was to create an environment to pull them into for the finishing touch.

Treaty negotiations: Monday-day #1

I arrived to the negotiations room early the following week in a stylized Plains Indian traditional dress. As students entered the room my assistant took their books and packs from them, piled them all in a corner, and assigned a seat to each student. When all arrived nihinono'eitinou'u, I spoke to them in Arapaho. After going on for about two or three minutes, my accomplished interpreter, who had been prepped for the part, translated my speech as, "He greets you." I next informed them that as a representative of the Governor of Native Studies 309 I was there to explain what rights they, Niiciihehe' Hineniteeno' or the Little River People, did and did not possess and how the grading system and their grades had been restructured for them. Displaying all the strength and diplomacy of my position I read to them the prepared document, pausing every now and then as my assistant paraphrased brief translations for them in English. The poor fellows, deficient as they were, had the clear misfortune of being a people enslaved by their literacy, and finding themselves devoid of all writing utensils, they could hold nothing in their poorly trained memories. After about 30 minutes Niiciihehe' Hineniteeno' objected strenuously and demanded to see the treaty. I obligingly passed the treaty out and watched as they blankly stared at the incomprehensible document. As questions raged forth we tediously worked through translations, and then before they knew it the class time had come to an end. My assistant informed them that we would continue with negotiations in two days time.

Treaty negotiations: Wednesday-day #2

When we met again and Niiciihehe' Hineniteeno' entered the room they were informed as before that they would have to yield up all weapons in the form of writing implements and materials. When this was met with objections I set my assistant to the task of collecting their pitiful pamphlets and writing objects. Once again when denied the symbols of their culture's power and strength, they became docile. When I began to read the document to them, however, they again found cause for objection. This time they complained because they did not like the fact that I would read through passages of texts, but the translations they received would always be brief. They also complained that they were not able to remember everything said and demanded a translation written in their own language. It was impressed upon them that they were running out of time and that I was terribly disappointed with their inability to come to some sort of agreement among themselves. As the meeting time again came to an end, and with no conclusive agreement, the Little River People were informed that because of their poor level of cooperation and organization I was compelled to appoint two chief spokespersons for them: Beesheseis Hohootii'—Big Wind In The Trees, a person known for being argumentative, and Bei'ci3einii'ehiibi'—Little Hummingbird, a person known for being demure. They now could only speak and work through these two individuals at the next appointed meeting time.

Treaty negotiations: Friday-day #3

When I entered the meeting room I was immediately surprised to find the entire Little River People band had arrived much earlier and had taken the liberty to rearrange the meeting chairs in the shape of a semi-circle so they could better see and communicate with each other. They had decided to get down to the serious business of negotiations. I later learned that they had been meeting after class hours to come up with a clear and decisive negotiation strategy. While I must admit that they were better organized, it wasn't long before things broke down between the two chiefs, and between the people and the two chiefs. As things continued to break down a few members of the band resorted to trying to bribe me.

From a strategic point I clearly held the upper hand because while they struggled with the goal of understanding a treaty that was delivered to them in an unfamiliar language, my single objective was to get their chiefs to sign the treaty. In the last ten minutes of the class, and with time running out, agreement came and the appointed chiefs signed the treaty.

Treaty negotiations: Monday-day #4; the aftermath

The following week when the Little River People again assembled they learned that they had agreed to a treaty that not only robbed them of their individual rights, but also the rights of all others who placed themselves in NS 309 and under the sovereign directives of the Governor's representative of Native Studies. As that representative was me, I thereby held the right to alter any individual's grade for any reason at my own discretion. Needless to say the

Little River People became outraged and attempted to verbally accost me with a feeble threat of going to the media; I let them know that I liked the idea of being in the media and reminded them that they would also be put in a position in which they would have to explain why they signed the treaty. During the following days of debriefing, the class expressed their surprise over what they had learned and felt that they better appreciated the efforts of their ancestors, who must similarly had struggled trying to come to terms with concepts in a language they could not understand.

Circle the wagons: Indians!

As a professor at the University of Montana, I have taught a variety of courses in areas that have included Native Religion and Philosophy, Contemporary Indigenous Issues, Native Health and Healing, Introduction to Anthropology, Introduction to Native American Studies, Ritual and Ceremony, Introduction to Native Languages, Indian Culture as Expressed through Language, Indians of North America, Language and Culture, and Indigenous World View Perspectives, to give an idea of the diversity. In many of these courses I have been quite surprised by student responses toward material presented to them. My courses tend to be a bit rigorous, especially when teaching what I refer to as "issues" courses. In 1996 I decided since students often hear about the "Indian world view" and since I was teaching an Introduction to Native American Studies class, I would teach a component from an Indigenous world view perspective. The results were quite interesting.

One of the components I included in this Introduction to Native American Studies class was on Native philosophy and ethics. In this section I explained in advance that since students hear professors talk about "Indian world view perspective," I thought it appropriate that they should gain some first-hand knowledge of what an "Indian world view perspective" might entail. We discussed biases and different codes of ethics and worked through how things could be perceived through different realities. I explained that the first quiz would be tailored toward an Indigenous form of logical thinking and that they needed to be very aware that in this realm the rules that classically structured Anglo-European logic and thought would not necessarily apply. Even with this advanced warning, the cultural constructs of their logic were so strong that about 58% of a class of 160 failed the quiz. While some of these questions didn't entail much more than understanding specific concepts with corresponding definitions as they pertain to biases, like:

> When a Brazilian beat up a German, for flashing him what is classically thought of as the symbol for OK., the German had fallen victim to an example of
>
> A. a cultural bias B. a cognitive bias C. a conceptual bias
> D. a evaluative bias E. an ethnocentrism

others were a bit more complex in nature:

Because there were witches and shamans in the bush, an "ethic of..."

A. non-interference existed B. not showing fear existed
C. withdrawal existed D. not showing anger existed
E. none of the above

or:

In the Indian State of Mind, regarding imaging vs. imagining, the skilled imager existed

A. metaphorically B. in a world of spirits C. in two worlds
D. as a symbol for the tribe E. all of the above

or further:

In a car full of Indians if the driver didn't see a deer step out onto the road and was about to hit it, the "Indian" response would be to

A. politely inform him B. shout loudly
C. try and grab the wheel D. clear their throat
E. frantically point at the deer to get the driver's attention

Questions like these were genuinely problematic for students, and their cultural intuitions were so pervasive that even when the same questions appeared on subsequent tests, many students repeatedly got them wrong. In the end students became so frustrated when actually having to face issues that actually represented a different world view perspective that they chose to believe the test questions were unfair because they were not logical or they believed them to be trick questions.

Some of the most puzzling responses, though, have come from students enrolled in courses that one would think would be best taught from an Indigenous world view perspective. These occurred when I taught an introductory course on the Arapaho language for "Introduction to Native Languages" and another entitled "Culture as Expressed Through Language," both of which were taught under the Department of Native American Studies.

The Arapaho language class was small with only 16 students. The students were informed on the course syllabus that the course would be taught to parallel a language immersion teaching style. Students were frequently praised for an impressive ability they displayed in mastering fairly complex forms of the language. Yet, instead of being pleased by what they had accomplished, a number of students openly criticized the manner in which they had to learn the language. At the end of the term, while some students stated that the course would have been better if it had conformed to a more traditional academic style, others felt that the course would have been better taught by some one who was not Indian. While I was a bit surprised by this, I did observe an even more surprising response when I utilized an Indigenous perspective as a paradigm for another class.

Learn in Beauty

From January to May 1997, I taught a course on "Indian Culture as Expressed Through Language." When first asked to teach the course I struggled with the difficulty in teaching such a course. The question that kept emerging was: how does one teach Indian culture as expressed through language when the only medium of expression in the classroom is English? Clearly it would not be fair to teach Arapaho to a class so they could gain an appreciation of differences in the forms of cultural expressions between Arapaho and English. Yet, even if this approach were to have been taken, I realized it would have been unrealistic to think enough of the language could have been learned in one term for students to have actually gained such an appreciation. After struggling over the dilemma for several weeks I decided on the method I was to use to approach the topic.

One of the early assignments had students look at what is called an interlinear translation of Arapaho into English and then manipulate the English words so that they conformed to story constructs and patterns familiar to English. Students were first prepped for this task by listening to a tape of an Elder telling the story in Arapaho. This was done so that they could get an auditory exposure to the sound and rhythm of the language. After this they received a handout with the story written in Arapaho with the underlying English interlinear translation as illustrated by the following excerpt:

> Teecxo' ko3einiini hi'in nono'ei hi'in tih'iibeebeteesbi3i' hiit 3ebiisiihi' niiyou nuhu'
> long ago old one that Arapaho that when they used to fast here that way here it is this
>
> heeteih cowouute' hinee [Beaver Rim] hiisoho' hetoh'entou' hi'in nihii hoxtono'ou'[3]
> where there's a ridge that this way where it is that well where there are cliffs

In addition to the story conversion, students also had to write comments on what they thought about the exercise. Some of the comments written conveyed that it wasn't a worthwhile exercise; some went so far as to write that it was the most worthless exercise they had ever encountered while at college. Few were able to recognize that by looking at a language with a word order radically different from English through which a people thought, it was possible to see how speakers of this language could possess logical constructs that led them to perceive the world much differently from that of an English speaker. Some students were so far removed from seeing this connection that they chose instead to believe that the text merely represented an example of an individual who didn't know how to speak English very well (they had been informed that the translator was the speaker's son).

This particular course proved to be extremely challenging for students. A number of students perceived that the course should have addressed the topic

through the prose and poetic writings of Indigenous peoples, which again could only be done through the English language. As a result of the approach I had taken, versus what many students voiced they felt the class should be doing, there was a fair amount of resistance to learn what the course had to offer. This led me to explain to the class that the course would take on an "organic" quality, versus a static quality. From this position I felt I could bring in a certain amount of flexibility to change the structure that had been set for the course in an attempt to reach a greater number of students with examples that they could grasp. And, as I explained in class, as each week passed I would cast and recast the net, each time hoping that with the next cast I could draw in those students who had previously slipped through the netting.

In the last week of class final papers were turned in. One student paper sought to justify cooperative efforts between Peabody Coal and the United States government to exploit natural resources of Big Mountain and asserted that the government had every right to remove over 15,000 Navajos from their traditional homes so the land could be strip-mined.[4] The student believed that a movie about this issue, which had won international awards as a documentary and which documented numerous human rights violations surrounding the desecration of Indian people's culture and land, was biased in favor of the Indians and not entirely truthful. The student also wrote that the class was biased from the start by showing a video about the boarding school period in Canada and its role in destroying Indigenous culture and language in children. Because the perspective of this paper concerned me, I decided to present a first-hand experience through a simulation.

The student's basic premise was that the government held the right to do whatever it so desired to Indigenous people. I chose to take the student's logic and extended it as my own position in the class. I didn't grade the paper and informed the student to meet with me the day after the last class. At that meeting, as our discussion carried us through a number of relevant topics, I assessed the student's knowledge and understanding of some very pertinent issues covered in the class. When it seemed clear that this student saw no problem with Indigenous people and culture being exploited and having their human rights violated, I began to implement the simulation. I informed John (a pseudonym) that he had been withdrawn from the class. Now as it turned out this was a graduating senior majoring in international business, and without this class he would not possess enough credits to graduate. The student was startled and informed me that I could not do that. I in turn informed "John" that because I was the government that ruled over the class I not only could do it, but in fact had done it. The student challenged and said that he would take the matter up with the Registrar. I explained to the student that it was the Registrar who changed the status. The student next countered by telling me that he would go to the Dean. I told the student that I had already been there and that the Dean would just send him back to me. When John told me that he would go to the University's President I informed him that the President would only send him back to me. When John next told me that without this class he could not graduate and that I

had no right to interfere with his life in this way, I replied "but I thought you understood, I have every right because in this class I am the government, and as you have already noted, the government has every right to do what it chooses to people." The student defiantly stated that he would go to the Governor of the State. Realizing that I had neglected to inform the Governor of what I was doing, I informed John, "you will have to go outside of the state if you expect to get anywhere with this." The simulation having done its work he then stated; "I had no idea, I never understood." We had been in a discussion for close to three hours. Before it ended the student asked if I would take him onto a reservation about four hours away. A few days after our meeting I drove John onto the Blackfeet reservation, and for the first time since the course began, even though the term was now over, the student began to open up enough to hear and revisit the lessons that were supposed to have been learned.

It is interesting to note, that while the Dean was very uneasy about this exercise, his response was, "You know this is a new one on me. I've been at this University for over 30 years and I have never seen a professor go to such lengths to educate a student the way you have." Prior to this statement he told me you can't educate every student and wanted to know why this one student. To this I replied that my concern for those students who successfully understood the issues was not the same as it was for those students who did not understand the issues faced my Indigenous peoples. What was underlying this was a concern that until the material was grasped, the potential to have a positive or negative impact might hang in the balance.

One more interesting note about this class. When I last taught the class during the spring of 1999, I had decided to begin each class by explaining in Arapaho what I would talk about that day. Several weeks into the term I noticed many students were still very uncomfortable hearing me talk in Arapaho. When I voiced that I had observed this and invited the class to discuss their thoughts about the relevance or non-relevance of Arapaho being spoken in the class, a graduate student was first to speak. He began by stating how when he first heard me speak Arapaho it made him uncomfortable and that he had felt the language had no place in the classroom. He also stated that had I not asked the class to reflect on this he probably would have continued to feel this way. This marked the first time he began to wonder why hearing me speak Arapaho sparked such a response. In the end, as a result of my being sensitive to this general discomfort and inviting students to discuss it, the class was able to gain a much better understanding of the language's relevance in "Indian Culture as Expressed through Language."

When I first came to the university in January 1995, I was asked to teach a course on Native Religion and Philosophy. Courses like these are what I refer to as soft courses because I don't deal with difficult issues like human rights violations. Toward the end of the term a special class was held. Members of the class decided to meet at 5 am in the morning. At the appointed rendezvous we made our way to the top of a mountain where we sat, and after praying in Arapaho, genesis stories were told as the sun rose.

When the class met again, because some students had chosen not to attend this class, I decided to have those who had attended form an outer circle facing those who hadn't attended, who formed an inner circle facing the other students. Moving around the circle, the students who had been on the mountain individually commented on what they had experienced. To my surprise many students expressed that their lives had been changed or significantly impacted. This response caused me to wonder how a single event such as this could have such a dramatic impact upon their lives. I later settled on a tentative realization that often in a course like this there is an expectation that some level of metaphysical or spiritual enlightenment might be experienced, which had unintentionally been supplied to them through the 5 am class held at the top of a small mountain.

The likes of a Dog Soldier in an Australian classroom

From July to November 1997 I had the opportunity to lecture at Southern Cross University in Lismore, New South Wales, Australia. Making the long journey to Australia allowed me ample time to ponder what I would find with regard to any differences in response to the particular perspective that I brought to the classroom. As I reflected on a variety of issues, a change came over me that I likened to that of the Dog Soldiers. The Dog Soldiers were a society of Cheyenne warriors who had pledged their life as warriors to protect their people. When in battle they were often the first line of defense, standing between the advancing enemy and their people. Stories are told how they would tie a leather thong around their leg, the other end attached to an arrow or a wooden spike that was driven into the ground. From this position they defended the people, and by this act Cheyenne Dog Soldiers helped to ensure the continuation of both their tribe and culture.[5] Reflecting upon this I titled my first public talk in Australia "In the Likes of the Dog Soldiers the People are Making Their Stand."

During the middle part of September I was asked to give a guest lecture for a Spiritual Well Being class at Southern Cross University. Knowing the nature of my talk, I decided to prepare the room, students, and myself through a smudging, and as a result of this blessing way, I had little choice but to handle the material in the most respectful and caring way. At Southern Cross University classes were structured such that instructors would first give a formal lecture, which would then be followed by tutorials where students and instructors would discuss the material lectured about in the previous class. During the talk that I gave to this class the tone and demeanor of all involved was respectful. Many issues concerning Indigenous spirituality were covered, including the issue of cultural appropriation. I explained how Native Sacred ways of knowledge are culturally specific and when non-Indigenous people appropriate this knowledge they often unknowingly violate numerous restrictions. For some Indigenous cultures when this happens it does not bring harm to the violators, but rather to the people who are a part of the culture and who stand as the cultural caretakers of this knowledge.

Drawing from a parallel situation, I respectfully gave an example of the growing number of "Anglo" women groups and their women-only business. In

spite of class members defending the right of women to exclude men from women's-only business, when shifting back to Indigenous ceremonies, and an espoused right by some Indigenous groups to exclude non-Indigenous people from their ceremonies, a number of class members stood firm in their belief that non-Indigenous people had the right to access Indigenous Sacred ways of knowledge.

During the tutorial that followed, at which I was not present, the instructor later told me that some members of the class sought to defend their position by proclaiming me to be an "angry young man" (though twice the age of many in the class) who spoke only from personal rage. While this voiced perspective contrasted interestingly with my having conducted a blessing way ritual which helped to put me in a mind-set that worked to keep me focused, patient, and passive, it also served to provide a rationale for those who did not want to give much thought to an issue presented from an Indigenous perspective that differed from their own personal perspective.

The lesson to LERN is how to hear the lesson to learn

While I have observed a mixture of student responses during my stay as a visiting lecturer at Southern Cross University, I have also been intrigued by the responses of individuals outside the structured environment of the classroom. In October 1997, my participation at the Literacy and Education Research Network (LERN) Conference in Alice Springs, Australia provided me an opportunity for such observations. At the conference my presentation was quite different from other presentations. This was by virtue of my presentation's focus on the integration of Indigenous perspectives in education. On the day following my talk, I was approached by one of the participants who informed me that what I was doing had more to do with bringing a good teaching style into the classroom than it had to do with bringing an Indigenous perspective into the classroom. Here it is worth commenting on why I believe I am able to assert the claim of my bringing an Indigenous perspective to the classroom. One reason I made this claim was due to my never learning of any other professor, at any school I had taught at, ever holding a class about an Indigenous North American culture while moving the class the entire lecture through a snow laden forest. The objective of this was to give them a sense of what if might be like if they were a group of Iroquois on the move. Another technique I have employed was holding several classes in a Teepee in a manner that reflected how a Plains Indian people would conduct a meeting. While I am sure such things have been done by others, one comment I can make is that even if non-Indigenous lecturers were to do this, there is in all probability a distinct difference between what they bring to the classroom and what an Indigenous person raised in his or her culture ways and who speaks their Native language brings to the classroom. Normally this would be recognized as an Indigenous perspective, and a person who has not shared in an Indigenous language, culture, or history can only questionably claim to share in an Indigenous perspective. Still, it is of further interest to ponder why what I presented as my Indigenous voice, representing

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my experience and perspective as an Indigenous person, would be corrected by a non-Indigenous person as not being an Indigenous perspective at all.

The last day of the LERN conference was devoted to a plenary session. When I was first asked to sit on the closing plenary panel to address the conference's closing question of "Where do we go from here?" I thought; "how presumptuous it would be on my part, as an outsider, to assume I should elaborate on where Australian education and educators should direct themselves." My initial response to this request was to try and politely decline the invitation. It was not until after the invitation was made a third time by an Indigenous Australian that I accepted and began to wonder how I could best address the issue.

Having been invited to their table and having taken a seat, when it was my turn to speak I communicated my uneasiness about being at the table as an outsider and explained that I felt the best way I might address the question was to give examples regarding Indigenous issues and education from my home country. Drawing from the genre of our Trickster tales, wherein we learn from Trickster's improper behavior how to behave properly, I delivered the following closing plenary statement:[6]

By the mid 1600s the colonization of Indigenous North Americans was in full swing. Then, after about 320 years, there was a shift in the paradigm, and Anglo-Americans representing their governments and institutions began to invite Indigenous people to their tables; the idea being that there might be something to learn from what Indigenous people had to say. It is thus interesting to note that once invited to the table, those who made the invitation were never quite patient enough to really hear the message that was to be learned. In retrospect there is an interesting parallel with this and a certain event that happened the evening of the LERN banquet that has drawn me to ponder the irony of my having been invited to this closing plenary table.

On the evening of the banquet I decided to tell an "Indian" story that was very meaningful to me. This decision stemmed from my feeling that being at the LERN conference had been a good learning experience. Having realized this I had wanted to share something in return with the people I believed I had connected with. It was a difficult decision for me to make, but because of the message within the story, that actually addresses the journey we all seem to be on and where one might be led to on that journey, I put my concerns at ease and decided to tell the story. It was thus ironic that the most dramatic part of the story, which addressed this journey in a very culturally specific way, was never reached because too many people were not able to figure out what they were listening to. Thus when the story's main character stood at a crossroad wondering where he must go from there, many of listeners, who believed at that very point the story was all part of a joke, reduced the story to a punch line and exploded in an outburst of laughter. Distressed by this response, I pondered for hours over what I had done.

Learn in Beauty

In North America, after 300 years of being told Indigenous people must be assimilated to the values and norms of Anglo-Europeans, in spite of our now having Indigenous people who hold PhDs over a broad spectrum of disciplines and who are Medical Doctors, Judges, Lawyers and in numerous other professions, we are still treated as if we do not know our own business and must therefore be either led or told what to do.

On those occasions when we find ourselves at a table of our own making within Anglo created institutions, there are times when we are subjected to people coming to our table only to walk away before our story has been fully told, which many times is due to finding Indigenous cultural paradigms too different from their own. It would thus appear that as long as Indigenous people remain a small minority, within non-Indigenous systems and institutions, true equity may never be realized. It is perhaps for this reason that some Indigenous groups, like the Maori of New Zealand and Hawaiians, have created their own institutions which operate exclusively under guidelines of their making and for their own well-being.

Recognizing that we can work together without necessarily having to undermine the integrity of who we are culturally, I would hope that those who would seek to invite Indigenous people to their tables can also see the merit in not interfering or becoming judgmental when Indigenous people create environments that we see as culturally proper. I would also hope that when people are invited to come to such places of learning they will sit at our tables and be able to hear the lessons to be learned.

Notes

[1]For additional information about this class see Stephen Greymorning, *Integrating an Aboriginal Perspective into the Classroom* (Sydney: Aboriginal Studies Association Journal, University of New South Wales, 1993).

[2]Metis is a termed officially used by the Canadian government for people of mixed Indian descent. While the term was used historically to imply mixed Indian and French descent, the term is now used by the Canadian government for Natives of any mixed descent.

[3]Alonzo Moss, *The Stories of Paul Moss* (Laramie: the Wyoming Council For the Humanities, 1993).

[4]For information on this issue see Ward Churchill, "Genocide in Arizona?: The 'Navajo-Hopi Land Dispute'" in *Struggle for the Land* (Toronto: Between the Lines, 1992, pp. 143-196).

[5]For more information on the Cheyenne see G. B. Grinnell, *The Fighting Cheyennes* (New York: Scribner, 1915) and G. A. Dorsey, *The Cheyenne* (Field Columbian Museum Anthropological Series, Vol. IX, Nos. 1 & 2, 1905).

[6]Stephen Greymorning, *A Message to LERN*, closing plenary statement at Alice Springs (Australia, 1997).